

# The ADVOCATE

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## **\$30K grant to help families dealing with AIDS and HIV**

By Christiana Sciaudone, Staff Writer, The Advocate

STAMFORD - The Red Ribbon Foundation of Greenwich awarded Stamford CARES \$30,000 for an initiative that will help children living in families affected by HIV or AIDS.

Stamford CARES said its Family Hope initiative will fill gaps in service to meet the emotional and behavioral needs of children and adolescents with a parent who has HIV or AIDS.

The Stamford nonprofit agency provides HIV and AIDS services, including support groups, case management, emergency financial assistance and referrals to medical care.

Stamford had 751 documented cumulative cases of AIDS as of December, and there are an estimated 1,200 to 1,500 cases of HIV, according to the health department. The total number of children and adolescents of affected families in Stamford is not known.

Stamford CARES hired a family case manager, Allegra Palevich, last month with the grant money from Red Ribbon.

While most HIV and AIDS case managers with Stamford CARES work with 40 to 70 infected people, Palevich will work with just 20 so she can be "intimately involved" with entire families, said Mary Ellen Hass, executive director of HealthCare Connection, a Stamford nonprofit that operates Stamford CARES.

Palevich will focus on the needs of children under 13, teaching them life skills and providing basics such as housing, clothing, shelter and medical care.

More than 90 percent of affected families are single mothers who are infected and have small children who live at or below the poverty line, said Dennis Torres, program director for Stamford CARES.

The goals of the grant are to help families function better, avoid family breakdowns and educate children about prevention as they are considered a high-risk group, Torres said.

The Red Ribbon money comes from a fundraiser last October that brought in more than \$400,000. The money was allocated in amounts of \$5,000 to \$30,000 to 19 organizations worldwide, said Mary Beth McCarty, executive director of the Red Ribbon Foundation. She is the only staff member of the nonprofit group.

"We support AIDS projects in three different areas," McCarty said, including prevention education that targets at-risk individuals; research for a cure; and support programs for people affected by AIDS.

Red Ribbon, founded in 1994 by Greenwich parents who lost a son to AIDS, has provided six grants to Stamford CARES since 1995, McCarty said

Red Ribbon has awarded \$1.2 million since its inception.

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